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# Report on Relief

OF

## Destitute Unemployed

1914-1915

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

Governor Hiram W. Johnson

BY

The Commission of Immigration and Housing  
of California

JUNE TWENTY-FIFTH, 1915



CALIFORNIA  
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# Commission of Immigration and Housing of California

UNDERWOOD BUILDING  
525 MARKET STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

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## COMMISSIONERS :

SIMON J. LUBIN, President, Sacramento

MOST REV. EDWARD J. HANNA, D.D., Vice President, San Francisco

MRS. FRANK A. GIBSON, Los Angeles

J. H. McBRIDE, M.D., Pasadena

PAUL SCHARRENBERG, Secretary, San Francisco.

GEO. L. BELL,

*Attorney and Executive Officer*

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSION OF IMMIGRATION AND HOUSING OF  
CALIFORNIA

UNDERWOOD BUILDING

SAN FRANCISCO, June 20th, 1915.

*To His Excellency, HIRAM W. JOHNSON,*  
*Governor of California.*

SIR: We beg to submit herewith a report of the work done by this Commission, at your request, in connection with the relief of the unemployed during the winter of 1914-15.

Respectfully yours,

SIMON J. LUBIN, President,  
E. J. HANNA, Vice President,  
MARY S. GIBSON,  
J. H. McBRIDE,  
PAUL SCHARRENBURG, Secretary.  
*Commissioners.*





## INTRODUCTION

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On December 9, 1914, the Commission submitted to the Governor a report on the general problem of unemployment. That report embodied conclusions and recommendations which were made after a year of study and investigations undertaken at the request of the Governor. In addition to recommendations looking toward the elimination of unemployment and the solution of the industrial problem, the Commission made certain suggestions concerning the alleviation of suffering and want—the more immediate problem of unemployment. The substance of these latter suggestions is contained in the following extract from the report:

### Suggestions for a Method of Dealing with the Destitute Unemployed During the Winter of 1914-15.

An entirely separate and distinct problem is the question as to how to handle the unemployed of the state during the coming winter. There is every indication that we shall have many roving, unemployed and destitute men in the state.

Since any possible state legislation looking toward an alleviation of the situation could not become effective in time to meet the needs of this winter, the burden of the problem must rest upon the different communities and municipalities, and they must deal with the problem locally. However, we deem it advisable that some uniformity should be established in the method of handling the various unemployed groups, and therefore suggest that some existing state board or a special, representative committee, to be appointed by your Excellency, undertake the formulation of some plan of action and urge the adoption of the plan by the various authorities.

Merely as a tentative suggestion we submit the following general program which such a state board or committee might follow:

I. It is essential that the various local authorities be first impressed with the fact that the practice of driving the unemployed out of one town and on to the next is not a solution but an aggravation. It has been the custom to employ these tactics in the past, and this treatment has resulted in the development of a spirit of rebellion and anarchy in the unemployed, leading them to form into roving, incorrigible "armies." Merely passing these "armies" on from one town to another creates a vicious circle throughout the state and encourages the members in the acquisition of wandering, irresponsible habits. These restless, roving groups are breeding places for petty crimes, and the problem of prevention and control by the state is made more difficult because the offenders are transient and ever moving.

Therefore each municipality or community, in proportion to its population and facilities for charity work, should bear the burden of providing for the immediate needs of the unemployed in the state during the coming winter.

II. However, after the local authorities are persuaded to aid in the attempt to stem the restless, swaying tide and to establish some semblance of stability, careful and discriminating methods must be worked out for providing relief.

The mere announcement that all California municipalities are to care for the unemployed would bring hordes of applicants for charity from all the western states, eager to spend a winter in our mild climate, and many who are not in genuine need would be tempted to try their luck at enjoying our munificence. In order to provide against such a predicament any scheme that is devised to meet the situation should include the strict application of a work test. The board or committee which your Excellency might designate to handle this matter could render incalculable service to the state by carrying on a nation-wide campaign of publicity, warning:

(a) The employable unemployed that there is no work to be had in California; and (b) the unemployable vagrants, that there will be a rigorous application of the work test in all relief or aid provided.

III. As a basis for discussion and action by any board or committee your Excellency might appoint to put in operation a uniform plan, as we have suggested, we submit the following concrete suggestion:

(a) The city council, or governing body, in every incorporated city or town should be urged to establish a municipal lodging house, furnishing sleeping quarters and food.

1. All homeless and destitute men in the community who apply voluntarily should be furnished accommodation in return for work for a certain number of hours a day. Provision should be made for registering all these unemployed and destitute men by a given date. This would give a census and set a time limit for applicants. The work referred to could be in the form of labor on the streets and roads, cleaning up vacant lots, work in public buildings and institutions, etc. The result of this work would not meet the cost to the municipality, but the cost of caring for these men must ultimately be borne by some organization or individuals, and the loss would be more equitably distributed than if it were placed upon the private charitable agencies or philanthropic individuals, who (as we point out below) have a sufficiently difficult task in caring for destitute resident families.

2. All homeless men who are brought into court and convicted as vagrants, merely because they have no means of support, should be given suspended sentences and sent to the municipal lodging house, and also put to work. If such men break this semi-parole they should be sent to jail and put at enforced work.

(b) The associated charities of the different communities should be awakened to the critical problem at hand and urged to organize carefully for the coming season. These organizations should be advised to provide adequate funds, and organize volunteer personal service to care for destitute *resident* families. The attention of these private organizations should be directed entirely to the needy residents, and only incidentally should they aid the municipality in providing for the homeless destitute.



(c) In those cities that have no associated charities organization (such as Sacramento) strong pressure should be brought to bear upon the citizens to organize one.

(d) Specialized charities, churches, social settlements, etc., should be urged to make additional efforts to meet the emergencies of the season and to continue the work in their distinct fields with redoubled efforts. Past experience has shown that such organizations are apt to become panic-stricken and to even curtail their work and throw it off on larger and more general organizations.

(e) Looking more toward industrial relief measures, all state and local public departments should be encouraged to enlarge their work wherever possible, such as state highway and county construction, sewer construction, erection of public buildings, etc. The commencement of public work for which appropriations have been voted might be hastened; and public work which is usually done in the summer season might be done in the winter, where the climate permits. \* \* \*

On December 15, 1914, the Governor endorsed the plan and requested the Commission to undertake the task outlined therein. The Commission immediately employed Mr. George L. Melton of Pasadena, as special agent to handle this work and instituted a vigorous campaign to secure the co-operation of the municipalities in putting this suggested uniform plan into operation. Mr. Melton devoted about three months to this work and this report is based upon his report to the Commission. This work was necessarily planned more or less hastily, and undertaken in an emergency to meet a temporary but pressing need. However, in the following pages, a brief account is rendered with the belief that it will point out the advantages of a uniform and state-wide plan in this relief work, and with the hope that it may offer some suggestion for future action in dealing with this ever recurring problem.

## REPORT

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Even without accurate data upon which to base conclusions the Governor and the Commission of Immigration and Housing realized that during the winter of 1914-15 California would be called upon to support an even greater number than usual of unemployed. Prevailing economic conditions would render idle many residents of the State ordinarily employed while the same conditions existing throughout the country would add to the army of unemployed yearly attracted by California's climate. Added to these probabilities, the Expositions in San Francisco and San Diego, suggesting possibilities of employment, would serve as an open inducement to many others.

When requested to take charge of the campaign in behalf of the relief of the unemployed, the Commission found itself confronted by two tasks. First, it was at once apparent that necessary steps should be taken to prevent the unemployed of the eastern and central states from coming to California and adding to her already heavy burden. This result was obtained by means of a press campaign, vigorously executed, whereby the migratory population of the eastern and central states were determinedly informed that California offered no special inducements to those who came here expecting to exist upon public bounty, and that little or no work was to be had. This action by the Commission resulted in protecting the state from many who would have been but objects of charity, yet who would have had no claim upon our people.

The second task confronting the Commission was to put into operation the plan for aiding the various classes of unemployed already here. To be effective, this assistance must be rendered without delay, it must avoid charity wherever possible—this both for the betterment of the individual requiring aid and for the good of the community. The plan must be comprehensive enough to cover the entire State, yet sufficiently elastic to permit local adaptations. Lastly, it must not be a burden upon a particular community.

The province of the Commission was to present to the local authorities the plan which had been submitted to and approved by the Governor, and to advise them regarding the best methods for adapting it to local needs and carrying it into effect. To the local communities was left the task of putting the project into operation.



## I. ACTION TAKEN BY THE VARIOUS COMMUNITIES

### (A) Northern California

On investigation, conditions in the northern portion of the State proved to be much better than anticipated, though the situation looked gloomy in December. Due probably to the gloomy outlook early in the season, the migratory element largely moved southward, greatly relieving the northern communities, but at the same time emphasizing the problem in the south. Northern conditions were also further remedied by the unexpected opening up for winter work of the lumber mills in the vicinity of Eureka and of mines in the Redding district.

The Commission corresponded with the officials in Redding, Red Bluff, Chico and Marysville, and a representative later made investigations among the unemployed in these communities and conferred with the local authorities. Although there were no larger unemployed groups in these districts, and the problem was comparatively small, the authorities evinced a willingness to work in co-operation with the larger cities in following the uniform plan of furnishing relief.

### (B) Central California

In the central portion of the State the presence of larger cities—which always attract the man out of work—was expected to produce an even more serious condition; the additional attraction of the San Francisco Exposition being an added problem.

On December 16, 1914, therefore, a conference of the mayors of the cities of central California was held in San Francisco to consider their problem of unemployment during the coming winter months. At this meeting were representatives from San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Alameda, Berkeley, Stockton, Emeryville, Hayward, Richmond, and San Jose; the president of the Commission also being present as the special representative of the Governor, who was unable to attend. A subsequent meeting was held on December 22d, at which time was adopted substantially the program outlined by the Commission. The cities represented were pledged to stop the practice of "floating on" the destitute unemployed, and to follow this uniform plan of relief work.

As a result of these meetings and the subsequent assistance given by the Commission of Immigration and Housing, effective work along the lines agreed upon has been carried on in all but two of the cities represented at the San Francisco conference. Later, two additional cities, Fresno and Bakersfield, took up the plan, thus caring for the southern portion of this region.



Sacramento remains the only important city that, as a municipality, has taken no action to care for her unemployed, though the commissioners of the city agreed not to "pass on" her indigent. When confronted with the necessity for action in caring for the unemployed already there, the city's governing board declared itself helpless, and the relief of the unemployed was left entirely to private citizens and organizations. While powerless to relieve the immediate situation they agreed that an attempt will be made to conform to this Commission's plan in the next year's efforts.

Whether due to mere apathy or some more serious reason, this phase of Sacramento's civic life should give concern to those interested in the city's welfare. The lack of adequate organization of charity activities, city and county, has been commented upon by the State authorities. An actual danger confronts the city in the possible unwise use of the "Land Memorial Fund." If distributed as at present it will inevitably tend to develop a class of paupers. On the other hand, should the fund be employed in a manner worthy the donor's purpose, it gives Sacramento an opportunity possessed by but few cities for conservative charity work.

#### (C) Southern California

It was anticipated that southern California would receive its full quota of unemployed. In addition to those properly classified as residents of the region an undue proportion of the migratory class drifted southward as the rainy season advanced. Early in January, San Jose railroad officials estimated that approximately 200 men, following the coast line southward, passed through that city daily. The railroads of the San Joaquin Valley supplied passageway for the remainder of these "uninvited tourists."

However, claiming that Los Angeles had no serious unemployment problem, the mayor of that city refused to take action to work in harmony with the other cities. Much efficient work is being done by the city's Free Municipal Employment Bureau, but it is not within the province of such a bureau to create work even for the purpose of affording relief to the destitute. The actual need became so great that the Los Angeles chief of police requested the establishment of a municipal lodging house, but this request was also refused. Our Commission was further informed by the Los Angeles Associated Charities that such provision would not only be refused by the city but that this organization would endeavor to prevent the establishment of such an institution by any other agency. A road camp maintained in one of the city's parks located several miles from Los Angeles furnished relief for all the city's unemployed, was their claim, although it furnished accommodations for only some three hundred men, while

conservative estimates placed the number of homeless, wandering unemployed men in Los Angeles at from five to seven thousand.

The result being, except for the splendid response made by the Los Angeles County board of supervisors, the city would have experienced a crisis not at all to her credit. As shown further on in this report, the latter officials made every effort to meet the needs of the situation—and were very successful.

In Pasadena, the city commissioners accepted the plan proposed by the Commission of Immigration and Housing in toto, appropriating money to bear that city's burden.

The same generous response was made by Redlands and Riverside, in the latter instance the city and county working together. San Diego likewise liberally appropriated \$10,000, which was expended in street work.

On the whole the southland has responded admirably to the trying demands and in the same generous spirit that characterized practically all the region to the north. In almost every community the Commission's agent found a spirit of co-operation and a response to the plea that the cities should unite in bearing their burdens instead of constantly trying to escape responsibility by ever passing the burden on and on in a vicious circle.



## II. SUMMARY OF REPORTS FROM VARIOUS CITIES

The following is a summary from cities which have reported on the action taken by them in co-operation with the Commission of Immigration and Housing and other cities in carrying out a uniform plan. It indicates the manner in which the work has been carried on and shows the results obtained:

### 1. Character of organization having charge of work:

- Alameda: Municipal Employment Bureau under the city clerk and relief committee representing the city council.
- Bakersfield: Citizens' Relief Committee supported by public subscriptions and Employment Bureau established by city trustees.
- Berkeley: Commission of Public Charities representing the city council.
- Fresno: Relief Committee representing the city, county and individual support.
- Los Angeles: County Board of Supervisors represented by special committees and Charity Bureau.
- Oakland: Municipal Public Woodyard co-operating with the Associated Charities and representing the city council.
- Pasadena: Relief Committee and Associated Charities representing the city commissioners.
- Redlands: City officials representing the city council.
- Riverside: Combination of city and county interests.
- San Francisco: Relief Committee working with city officials and Associated Charities.
- San Jose: Relief Committee and city organization.
- Stockton: Municipal Woodyard and Free Employment Bureau representing San Joaquin County Supervisors.

### 2. In distributing work preference has been given resident heads of families in Alameda, Berkeley, and San Francisco. In the following cities all heads of families have been treated on the same basis: Bakersfield, Fresno, Los Angeles County, Oakland, Pasadena, Riverside and Stockton.

### 3. Kinds of work supplied:

#### (a) Heads of families:

- Alameda: Street work, cleaning up vacant lots, clerical work (indexing health records).
- Bakersfield: Levee work.
- Berkeley: General.
- Fresno: Street work, and work in parks, cleaning up vacant lots.
- Los Angeles County: Road work and constructing storm drains, making fire breaks.
- Oakland: Work in city park and on streets.
- Pasadena: Work on streets and in city park.
- Redlands: Work on streets and in city park.
- Riverside: Miscellaneous.
- San Francisco: Building and repairing roads.
- Stockton: Woodyard.

#### (b) Single Men:

- Alameda: Street work and cleaning up vacant lots.
- Berkeley: Woodyard.
- Fresno: Street work.
- Los Angeles County: Road work.
- Oakland: Woodyard.



Pasadena: Street and park work.  
 Redlands: Street and park work.  
 Riverside: Woodyard.  
 San Francisco: Woodyard.  
 Stockton: Woodyard.

4. Wages Paid (incomplete report):

(a) Heads of families:

Alameda: 25 cents per hour.  
 Fresno: \$2.40 per day, payment being made in grocery orders, and work furnished for only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  days each week.  
 Los Angeles County: \$2.00 per day.  
 Oakland: \$2.00 per day.  
 Pasadena: \$2.25 per day.  
 Redlands: \$2.25 per day.  
 San Francisco: \$1.60 per day of 8 hours—3 days a week.  
 Stockton: \$2.00 per day, payment being made in groceries.

(b) Single Men (incomplete reports):

Alameda: 25 cents per hour.  
 Berkeley: Two meals and lodgings for varying amount of work.  
 Fresno: Two meals daily and lodgings for 3 half-day's work per week.  
 Los Angeles County: \$2.00 per day.  
 Oakland: 1 hour's work for each meal, same for bed.  
 Pasadena: Meals and lodging for two day's work per week.  
 Redlands: \$2.25 per day.  
 Riverside: 1 hour's work for each meal, same for bed.  
 San Francisco: 2 hours' work for two meals and bed.  
 Stockton: 1 hour's work for each meal, same for bed.

5. Approximate amounts of money expended under supervision of the local authorities and sources from which it was derived.

Alameda: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$930, of which \$750 was appropriated by the city council and the rest was raised by popular subscription.

Bakersfield: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$5,000 raised by popular subscription.

Berkeley: December, 1914, to April 1, 1915, \$1,400 appropriated by the city council.

Fresno: December, 1914, to June 1, 1915, \$4,925 derived as follows:

City .....	\$1,175
County .....	1,250
Private subscriptions .....	2,500

Los Angeles County: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$79,806.

Oakland: December, 1914, to April 1, 1915, \$5,397, appropriated by city council.

Pasadena: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$2,500.

Redlands: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$500 appropriated by city council.

Riverside: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$1,000 appropriated by county.

San Francisco: December, 1914, to March 1, 1915, \$27,301, derived as follows:

City .....	\$16,700
Private subscriptions .....	10,601

Stockton: \$3,141.53 appropriated by San Joaquin County.

NOTE: The reports do not show in every instance the number of days a week work was available. It can be assumed that usually not more than two or three days per week was the average.

NOTE: The above statements do not include the amounts expended by associated charities and other private organizations.

## 6. Work done by cities in securing outside employment (incomplete reports) :

Alameda: (a) Men, 100 temporary positions found, ranging from  $\frac{1}{2}$  day to 2 weeks, 3 men placed permanently. Estimated wages thus earned, \$1,200.

(b) Women, 8 positions found. Estimated returns, \$400.

Bakersfield: 121 permanent and 171 temporary positions found.

Berkeley: Approximately 450 temporary positions and 30 permanent positions.

Fresno: 511 temporary and 340 permanent positions found.

Oakland: 30 temporary positions per week provided until first of year, few since that date.

Pasadena: 32 temporary and 2 permanent positions.

Redlands: 200 temporary and 40 permanent positions found.

Riverside: 605 temporary and 2 permanent positions found.

Stockton: 103 temporary and 25 permanent positions found.

## 7. Approximate number of unemployed directly aided by relief work undertaken by municipalities December, 1914, to April 1, 1915 (incomplete reports) :

Alameda: 200 given employment as relief work.

Berkeley: 1,852 meals and 1,301 lodgings in municipal lodging house provided in return for work.

Fresno: 4,000 unmarried men given meals and lodgings in municipal lodging house in return for work (10,834 lodgings provided); 200 men with families or dependents given employment at wage as relief work.

Oakland: 1,381 unmarried men given meals and lodgings in municipal lodging house in return for work in woodyard (35,681 meals and 13,638 lodgings provided); 275 men with families or dependents given employment at wage as relief work.

San Francisco: 6,295 unmarried men given meals and lodgings in return for work in woodyard (only partially supported by city appropriation); 1,503 men with families or dependents given employment at wage as relief work (4,149 persons being dependent on these men).

## 8. Productive value of work done by unemployed in return for relief furnished by municipalities (incomplete reports) :

Alameda: Estimated that city received full value. Work done was necessary and of permanent value to city.

Berkeley: Full value for park work. Work in woodyard paid for less than half of meals and lodgings furnished.

Fresno: Unemployed fairly earned 60 per cent of the relief accorded them in street and park work.

Oakland: Work rendered by men with dependents paid city in full for amount expended in wages. Cost of meals and lodgings per unmarried man was 21 cents per day; productive value of one man's labor in woodyard was 15 cents; cost of maintenance 6 cents per day per man.

San Francisco: Approximately full value rendered city in work on roads by men with dependents. Cost of meals and lodgings per unmarried man was 35 cents per day; productive value of one man's labor in woodyard was 8 cents; cost of maintenance was 27 cents per day per man.

## 9. Special Difficulties encountered were :

(a) Lack of funds.

(b) Too heavy a burden for local community.

(c) Lack of general interest.

(d) Local politics.

(e) Lack of charity co-operation.

(f) Work not constructive.

(g) Many men not suited for kinds of work supplied.



### III. BENEFITS DERIVED FROM THE CAMPAIGN

(A) The most evident benefit derived from the winter's work has been the temporary relief of distress. More than 100,000 persons have directly or indirectly shared in the efforts made in their behalf by a comprehending and generous group of cities and counties.

(B) By receiving work at a time when their resources were exhausted thousands of worthy men have been spared the ignominy of accepting charity.

In this connection attention should be called to the large percentage of our unemployed, both resident and migratory, who are fighting to maintain their self-respect by persistently resisting charity.

Conversely, by instituting and enforcing a real work-test, men of weaker moral fiber have been either eliminated or regenerated and aided.

(C) Not the least valuable of the benefits derived from the winter's work is the prevalent feeling generated among the unemployed that, as they frequently expressed it, "The cities are playing fair." The relief itself has in many cases been inadequate, the food poor, the work distasteful, but beyond these unfortunate phases the men saw the effort made in their behalf, grasped and appreciated the motive. The following comment typical of those from other sections, has been received from a local relief committee:

"Judging from the statements made by those whom we have assisted, the chief value in doing this work has not been so much in the money that was received, but in the change of attitude and a spirit of hope that was engendered in the men, through the fact that the city was taking some interest in their welfare. A number of them stated to me that they were quite despondent at first, but because of the interest that was taken in them, they felt they had received a new lease on life."—Report City Clerk Bosshard, Alameda.

(D) Notwithstanding the acute and widespread economic distress and the presence in our State of the largest number of unemployed in its history, California, during the winter months just past, has been notably free from the disorder so prevalent in the State during the previous winter and so apparent in other sections of the country during the past winter.

This propitious condition was partially the result, we may truthfully say, of the sane, prompt and generous manner with which the various public and private organizations have responded to the timely appeals made by the Commission for unity of action in meeting the impending crisis.



That a highly critical condition menaced the State in January and February was the belief of police officers and others whose experience in social problems enabled them to intelligently diagnose the portended situation. Early in the season the Commission's representative was informed that "demonstrations" would be made in at least six of California's leading towns. While such threats can not be taken literally, it was apparent that the police authorities of the cities named regarded the reports with alarm, recalling the agitations and war riots of the previous winter. It is therefore a source of justifiable gratification to note instead the state wide satisfaction which prevailed. That this happy result was everywhere ascribed to the work done by the State and cities in behalf of the unemployed is yet another cause of congratulation.

From the point of view of community investment, the expense incurred by this campaign is more than offset by the lessened cost to the State, through the timely reduction of crime, estimated by police officials at 25 per cent or more.

Not merely has crime been reduced, relief afforded and physical suffering minimized, but allegiance of the better element of the unemployed in constructive efforts to improve conditions has been secured.

The deflection of this better element proved fatal to the plans of the would-be trouble-makers. As the latter aptly expressed it, the State and cities were "stealing their ammunition." Early in the campaign men representing this latter class informed the Commission that the execution of its plans, should that prove possible, would prevent all trouble. The accomplished results justifies their prophesies and more than justifies the Commission's hopes.

(E) The fact that the principal cities and counties have joined harmoniously in concerted action along a given line will likewise produce good results. Unity of action by scattered communities in a great state such as California is invaluable and highly desirable, and this campaign just completed should form a precedent excellent for future endeavor in work of this kind or of a similar character.

An immediate benefit derived from harmonious action and the adoption of a uniform plan was the impressive effect produced upon the element disposed to trouble making. They at once realized their danger in inter-city organization, acting through the State as a clearing house. This no doubt contributed materially to the successful result of the winter's work.

Moreover, as the Commission suggested in its report to the Governor, the general acceptance of responsibility by the cities, and their refusal to "float" the destitute unemployed on and on, broke up or discouraged the organization of the "unemployed armies"—which were so numerous during the winter of 1913-14. Such "armies" bring little or no

good to their own members and they are potential factors in collecting "unemployables," breeding ill feeling, and producing disorder and actual riots. However, when the communities insist on forcing unemployed men from city to city—not toward any definite field of employment, but merely in a vicious circle—it is but natural that these roving, desperate men should organize to give some force to their demands for food and shelter." The adoption of a general plan and uniformity of action by the cities has demonstrated a fixity of purpose and a determination which disheartened the wanton trouble-makers who would organize "armies" to take advantage of the old unpreparedness and helplessness of the cities that supplied temporary shelter, donated abundant food, but applied no work-test, and only implored them to "move on" to the next town. It is by means of such organization of the cities, acting through some state board as a clearing house, that the "vicious circle" can be broken and lasting results achieved.

In this connection it is fitting to call attention to the manner in which the different cities have responded to the action of a state commission offering advice concerning local matters. With a single exception, instead of resenting as an intrusion the proffered assistance, the local authorities expressed appreciation for the State's interest and accepted the Commission's suggestions in the same spirit in which they were given.

In the Appendix of this report extracts of letters from various local officials are printed in order to show the feeling with regard to the value of this organized work in co-operation with the State authorities.



#### IV. OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED IN CAMPAIGN FOR CO-OPERATION

Obviously the campaign to secure uniformity of action in dealing with the unemployment relief problem was seriously handicapped by a late start. Although the uniform plan suggested was in itself simple, the field covered was large. The process of securing co-operation between widely separated units is always slow. If the work of the Commission could have been commenced in October or November, far better results could have been obtained. The Commission could have devoted more time to giving definite assistance to the cities and the cities could have made preparations before the crisis was upon them. In fact, the general failure to plan ahead and the refusal to face the problem until the need is pressing, is the most pertinent criticism of charity or relief work in municipalities. Plans can not be perfected nor the work well organized in the midst of the stress and hurry brought about by a zeal to relieve immediate want and actual misery. In only a few instances did the Commission find that preparations had been made in the fall for meeting the inevitable problems of the winter.

In addition to this general difficulty there were a few concrete things which were universal obstacles in the Commission's campaign. In the hope that "planning ahead" may be encouraged and certain pitfalls avoided in the future, these principal obstacles and defects are here mentioned in detail.

(A) No general provision was made to assist and furnish relief to unemployed women, this being left entirely to local charity organizations. The Commission had to undertake this relief work at such a late date and on such short notice that it was reluctant to suggest a plan which would cover all the complexities peculiar to relief work in this field, and the municipal governments made provisions for relief work only among unemployed men. Undoubtedly this is a defect and cities should officially undertake to organize relief work for the throngs of unemployed women as well as the men.

(B) There was little or no opportunity to organize local private charitable societies under a uniform plan which would eliminate duplication of effort. The Commission did not have time to call upon the various societies and bring about co-operation, and in very few cities is there a central organization or clearing house through which the charity societies can be reached. This lack of co-ordination is unfortunate and is bound to result in some wasteful overlapping of work.

(C) In every community difficulty was experienced in securing subscriptions from private sources to carry on relief work. This lack



of public response was to be expected. In the first place, there are many demands upon a generous Californian. Again, economic conditions affected not only the unemployed but the employers and the employed as well, while contributions to the Belgian Relief Fund gave reason for excuse to many. However, the realization that the work was state-wide and not merely local aided materially in those cities where private contributions were asked.

(D) Lack of Funds:

Almost without exception the average California city finds its regular activities hampered by lack of resources. Because of their rapid growth, the regular tax levy of these cities ordinarily proves wholly inadequate. It becomes therefore a serious problem to appropriate \$5,000 or \$10,000 for an unforeseen contingency, such as relief work for the unemployed. This was probably the most serious obstacle in the way of cities that were desirous of assuming their just responsibility in giving relief to the unemployed. Although this relief problem has been recurring annually the cities have made no effort to plan for it in their budgets.

In this connection the Commission desires to suggest to the various municipalities the advisability of establishing an emergency fund; this to be used for wages in payment of work given the unemployed and such funds to be drawn upon only when a given number of unemployed within the municipality indicates an emergency has arisen. This matter should be brought before the municipal authorities at once while the lesson of the present season is fresh within their minds and while provisions for raising such funds can be made.

The city of Alameda has just furnished an object lesson in this regard by adopting an initiative measure providing for the creation of a "Relief Fund" annually by special taxation. The city authorities began planning in March to meet next year's problem and this new ordinance is the result. It is estimated that a fund of about \$2,000 will thus be provided annually. To serve as a sort of model the ordinance is here reprinted in full:

*"Ordinance No. ----- new series creating a special fund known as 'Relief Fund'; requiring the council of the city of Alameda to include in the annual levy of taxes the sum of one (1) cent upon each one hundred dollars of valuation of taxable property in said city, to be apportioned to such fund; and providing for the expenditure of the moneys in such fund."*

*Be it ordained by the people of the city of Alameda as follows:*

SECTION 1. There is hereby created a special fund to be known as 'Relief Fund,' the moneys belonging to which shall be provided for and raised by the annual tax levy as hereinafter provided.

SEC. 2. It shall be the duty of the council of the city of Alameda, at the time provided by law for the determination of the rate of city taxes to be levied and collected upon the assessed valuation of the property appearing on the assessment book of said city, to include in the rate so to be determined, the sum of one (1) cent on each one hundred dollars of valuation of taxable property, specifying the portion of the whole of said rate so included as 'Relief Fund'; and thereupon in levying the tax to provide for raising the necessary revenue of the city for the fiscal year, it shall be the duty of said council to levy the tax at the whole rate as so determined by it.

SEC. 3. The moneys in said 'Relief Fund' shall be expended only in the payment of claims for labor and other personal services on public work authorized by said council, when, in its judgment, the providing of such work is necessary or expedient for the relief of unemployed or indigent residents of the city of Alameda. Such authorization shall be by resolution duly adopted declaring such necessity or expediency and specifying the public work to be done and the total sum to be withdrawn and expended from said Relief Fund under said authorization.

SEC. 4. Any moneys remaining in said Relief Fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be turned over and paid into the General Fund."

(E) It was often difficult and occasionally impossible to interest the public officials of the cities and bring them to face their local problems. It was found to be impossible to obtain co-operation by means of correspondence, personal visits by the agent of the Commission of Immigration and Housing being necessary. Even then, promises of co-operation were often executed in but a half-hearted manner, the final burden falling upon a few. However, this condition is characteristic of all co-operative action and must not be considered incidental to this work alone.

Local or personal politics occasionally proved of more importance than so minor a matter as unemployment and consequent suffering. As an illustration: After a thorough discussion with the Commission's agent concerning the local needs and the Commission's proposed plan, the mayor of one small city stated that he believed it the best line of action and that there was need for action, "but," said he, "you see we are going to have a little election here in about sixty days and I don't want to start anything." This official inertia or political obstacle is one the people themselves should insist upon having removed.



## V. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

With the knowledge that the unemployment relief problem will be a constantly recurring one, it is evident that its solution can be more easily effected by planning along broader and more definite lines than has been possible this season. With this object in view the Commission of Immigration and Housing offers for consideration a few suggestions as possible lines of action.

(A) The fundamental purpose of any action taken must be Constructive Relief Work, carefully planned and organized ahead of time.

Instead of delaying until another crisis comes, immediate steps should be taken to formulate a program for permanent State action. If prompt attention is given the impetus now felt by local communities, it may be utilized in preparing for future demands. Suitable work should be outlined, funds provided and definite plans formulated. Such steps will obviate many of the difficulties encountered during the past season.

Determined action should be taken to convince the central west and the eastern states that California can not accept responsibility for the support of non-resident objects of charity or persons liable to become such.

Charity itself should be extended only in cases of actual necessity. Whenever possible, work should be furnished instead. For such work funds should be provided for some form of general tax levy—certainly not left to private subscriptions or indiscriminate giving of alms.

Should the fact become generally known that Work not Charity was California's slogan, a great diminution in the number of alms-seeking applicants, both resident and non-resident, would result.

Less "boosting" and saner advertising by private and semi-private organizations will likewise prove a wholesome and commendable aid in reducing the influx of the migratory element.

(B) The plan should be statewide and the State should participate.

To prove most effective such effort can not be limited to local action. While it may be desirable that the city or county provide for its resident unemployed, the responsibility of caring for the unemployed migratory labor is somewhat of an imposition and an unmerited burden. Although many of these men do not properly belong to California, the State should share the burden of dealing with the problem of their support with the city and county. At any rate some state board should serve as a clearing house for the communities in working out and putting into operation a uniform plan, mutually beneficial to all parties concerned.



(C) Emergency relief work for the unemployed should be laid out by both the State and local governments each year—to be done only in case of emergency and absolute necessity.

1. This work should be generally distributed so that it would be accessible to the unemployed in different sections of the State.

2. It must be elastic—such as can be taken up or conveniently discontinued at any time to meet the varying demands.

3. It must leave labor mobile. Not only should it be so conducted as to prevent the attracting of labor from other channels, but it should be of such a character that it will cause labor to quickly withdraw whenever employment in the ordinary lines is available. In brief—it should serve as a sort of reservoir into which excess labor may be diverted and from which it will freely flow when needed elsewhere.

4. Idle labor from outside the State must not be attracted to California by this work. It should be limited primarily to residents.

5. Examples of work available for this purpose:

With her undeveloped resources, California can supply abundant projects meeting all requirements.

(1) Irrigation projects.

(2) Levee work in the Sacramento Valley.

(3) Drainage canals, as in the Fresno section.

(4) Road building. Work on state highways should be so arranged as to make it applicable wherever possible for unemployment emergency purposes.

(5) Forestry work, such as tree-planting, construction of fire-breaks and certain forms of lumbering.

In conclusion we reiterate that this campaign was in no way intended to solve the unemployment problem and it has not solved California's unemployment problem. It was an effort to relieve immediate want and distress caused by unemployment. It has relieved immediate distress; it has, in many instances, prevented the forced acceptance of charity; it has given to unfortunate men and women a more wholesome view of society; it has prevented disturbances almost certain to have come without such action; it has demonstrated that by means of co-operative action on the part of the State and local communities such work can be conducted in an efficient manner. And, what may be the most significant result of all, the campaign has proven that this experimental action may be made the basis of permanent constructive work—this work to be initiated by the State.

## APPENDIX

The following are extracts of letters written by the officials of various cities who have co-operated in the Commission of Immigration and Housing's statewide unemployment relief plan. They are reproduced here to indicate the attitude of municipalities toward inter-city and city-state co-operation. These communications also reflect a general conviction that the local governing bodies should undertake unemployment relief work as one of their official duties, rather than leaving it to a few private organizations and citizens.

## I.

Resolution adopted by the board of supervisors of Los Angeles County on April 19, 1915:

"Resolved, that it is the sense of the board of supervisors of Los Angeles County, that the plan suggested by the Commission of Immigration and Housing for the lessening of unemployment, during the past winter, as adopted by this board, has been effective in lessening want and crime, and has been carried out with the general approval of the community."

## II.

Extract of a letter from the chief of the police department of San Francisco:

"It is a pleasure to acknowledge the excellent results that have already been noted throughout the State of California as a result of your Commission's study and attention to the unemployed problem and the energy you have displayed in handling the many critical situations that have arisen.

In San Francisco there is already apparent a defined feeling of satisfaction in quarters that heretofore recked with the many complications that invariably attended an insidious unemployed situation.

Your work in ameliorating and alleviating the condition of the unfortunates who have heretofore suffered from lack of employment contributes greatly to the comparative lack of crime in San Francisco, and, I am sure, innumerable other cities in the state."

## III.

Extract of a letter from the chief of the police department of Berkeley:

"I beg to advise that it is my opinion that caring for the migratory laborers, as well as for the migratory undesirables, with proper lodgings and food, has decreased crime in this city fully twenty-five per cent.

It is my opinion that there should be established in every city a voluntary farm or similar place where those who desire to work may find employment at a small compensation sufficient to provide for their needs."

## IV.

The following is an extract from a letter from the city clerk of Alameda, who was in charge of the unemployment relief work in that city:

"Judging from the statements made by those whom we have assisted, the chief value in doing this work has not been so much in the money that was received, although that has, of course, been a very important matter, but in the change of attitude and a spirit of hope that was engendered in the men, through the fact that the city was taking some interest in their welfare. A number of them stated to me that they were quite despondent at first, but because of the interest that was taken in them, they felt they had received a new lease on life.

The council has realized the value of assisting the unemployed and it is about to place before the people an initiative ordinance to be voted on by them which will require the council each year to place one cent on each one hundred dollars



valuation in the budget for the express purpose of assisting the unemployed. That will give us about \$2,000 a year, considerably more than what we had this past winter.

In conclusion, I believe that results arrived at have been well worth the time and money necessary to carry on the work."

#### V.

The following is an extract from a letter from the chief of the police department of Fresno:

"Our segregated list shows there was an increase of crime but will also have to take into consideration that the population is much greater now. Perhaps there would have been a greater increase had the city not made arrangements to house and feed once a day a great many of the unemployed. Often at night there was as many as two hundred taken care of by the Municipal Lodging House and Salvation Army."

#### VI.

The following is a portion of a letter addressed to the Commission of Immigration and Housing by the superintendent of the Municipal Woodyard and Lodging House in Stockton:

"Your work in Stockton in connection with the unemployed was, in my opinion, most satisfactorily handled. Your time and efforts were greatly appreciated by this community and have met the approval of the county board of supervisors, and the police department of this city. I am authorized by the chief of police to say that it has helped to do away with the professional beggars and a great majority of the petty thieving which is done by men who are hungry and in great distress."

#### VII.

The following is a communication received from the chief of the police department of Riverside:

"Unemployed program as carried on by your Commission heartily approved by local authorities as beneficial and constructive. Am sure that crime has been reduced twenty-five per cent."

#### VIII.

The following is an extract from a letter addressed to the Commission by the chief of the police department of Pasadena:

"There has been a very noticeable decrease in the number of calls that have been sent into this office by people who have been held up by street beggars, and I think I am safe in saying that crime of all kinds has diminished at least one-quarter, as compared with the month of March, of this year.

The crime perpetrated in this city during this winter is far below our most sanguine expectations, and I feel that this is due in a great measure to the good work accomplished by the Commission of Immigration and Housing and that the Commission is deserving of our most hearty thanks for this work of prevention of crime, and I am heartily in favor of its being continued along the same lines."





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